

**Eugene Graywood Smyth, Ph. D. (1886 - 1975):
Obituary and Bibliography of an Entomologist**

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The death of Eugene Graywood Smyth, one of the old-time entomologists, is a great loss to the scientific world. He was born in Topeka, Kansas on July 28, 1886 and began studying insect life at an early age. He achieved local fame as a teenager for his butterfly collection.

Dr. Smyth would talk for many hours about the days he was under the tutorage of Dr. F.H. Snow of the University of Kansas. This was the era of coal oil lamp use for night collecting and traveling by horse and wagon. He was a student under Dr. Snow during the years from 1903 to 1907. Between July 22 and August 1 in 1903, he was collecting insect specimens around Congress Junction in Yavapai County, Arizona; between August 3 and September 3 near the Tappan's Ranch on the Bill Williams fork of the Colorado River; in 1904, at Thomas' Ranch in Oak Creek Canyon below Flagstaff, Arizona in Coconino County; and in 1905, he collected on the San Bernardino Ranch in the valley of Sycamore Creek east of Douglas, Arizona in Cochise County. The San Bernardino Ranch belonged to J.H. Slaughter, presumably the John Slaughter who was sheriff of Tombstone after the Earp-Clanton shoot-out in the early 1880's. On an expedition in 1906, Mr. S.E. Crumb, one of Dr. Smyth's fellow students, was collecting near the craggy peaks of the Baboquivari Mountains south-west of Tucson, Arizona, and while stopped for a lunch break, Crumb discovered and collected some *Amblycheila baroni*, a very rare tiger beetle at that time, which was climbing over rocks. The other members of the expedition then searched and collected as many other specimens as they were able to locate. They discovered that these particular tiger beetles would emerge in late afternoon at dusk. But, the collectors were supposedly endangered by bear and cougar and could not collect after dark. Each day, Dr. Snow would awaken his students with the cheery call: "Blyc, blyc, blyc it again boys, let's be off." Referring to the 1905 expedition, Dr. Snow wrote "My assistants on this trip were three students: Eugene Smyth, Ebb Crumb, and Rollin Perkins. And I have never had a more indefatigable corps of collectors." On these expeditions, the students were allowed to keep one specimen out of ten for each species collected. Dr. Smyth would recall the many times he became so absorbed in collecting in one place too long and would have to run to catch the disappearing wagon.

Economic Entomology was the field of science Dr. Smyth pursued for most of his life. He won a scholarship to Chicago University. Upon graduation he joined the United States Department of Agriculture in Washington, D.C. Working with L.O. Howard, he helped pioneer the research which proved that house flies contribute to epidemics of typhoid. Eyebrows were lifted by local residents as Dr. Smyth would pedal by on his bicycle collecting sticky paper containing fly specimens for this research.

In 1910, he was sent to Smyra, Turkey to investigate the fig damaging moth (*Esphestia cautella* Walk.). After solving this control problem, he was sent to Arizona in 1911 to work on alfalfa pests. At this time, blister beetles were defoliating acres of alfalfa. Between the years 1913 and 1920, he worked with the Department of Agriculture in Puerto Rico, where he devised new control measures to eliminate the spread of sugar cane pests. His methods are still used today for fumigating the ships importing and exporting produce to and from Puerto Rico. While in Puerto Rico, he worked out the life history of ten species of white grubs (*Lachnosterna*), of which five were species new to science. In 1922 and 1923, L.O. Howard, Chief of the Bureau of Agriculture, sent Dr. Smyth to southern Mexico and Guatemala in search of parasites for use in the control of the bean beetle. Working for the United States Department of Agriculture, he searched for agricultural pests, mainly *Epilachna*, and encountered many discomforts such as diarrhea, strange foods, and bed bugs, to name a few. Traveling into the steep baranncas around Coatepeque by horse or mule was quite dangerous during the rainy season. In a letter to F.H. Chittenden, Chief of Entomology in Washington, D.C., Dr. Smyth commented how slippery it became and preferred to trust his own feet to riding a mule. While in Guatemala and Mexico, he also collected many specimens of the local flora, which were later donated to the University of California in Santa Barbara.

During World War I, Dr. Smyth was a U.S. Army officer in Puerto Rico. While stationed in Puerto Rico, he met and married Laya Machat, a prima donna with a touring opera company. She later gave up her singing career to take care of Gene and his insects for the rest of her life. In 1926, Mrs. Smyth, accompanied by Dr. Smyth, traveled to Italy for a singing engagement. While there, Dr. Smyth collected many beetles and visited different research stations in France and Italy. In 1925, Dr. Smyth was elected a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science.

From 1929 to 1938, he worked for the Grace and Company sugar estates in Trujillo, Peru. Here he reared sixty million parasitic wasps to be turned loose in the sugar cane fields to work where insecticides could not reach in the heavy sugar cane stalks. In February of 1933, while on one collecting trip to the remote parts of the Chancamayo Valley in Peru, Dr. Smyth recalled how he was almost done in by some

local Indians. In one particular steep canyon, Dr. Smyth is quoted as saying "The Indians started rolling large boulders down upon me. With my Colt .45, I sent a volley of shots into the air; and the small, brown, naked men departed with great haste." While in South America, he received his Ph.D. at the University of Peru in Lima.

Semiretired in 1943, Dr. and Mrs. Smyth moved to their home in Glen Ellen, California, aptly named "The Perch." After three years in The Valley of the Moon, Dr. and Mrs. Smyth moved to Los Angeles in 1946, where he became Associate Curator of Entomology at the Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History (on a temporary budget item, July 1, 1946 to June 30, 1951). In 1954 Dr. Smyth retired and moved to Scarab Hill, the name of his home in Santa Barbara, California. His love of Entomology led Dr. Smyth to the Chiricahua Mountains in southern Arizona, with the aid of a grant from the David Rockefeller Foundation, American Museum of Natural History, New York, to collect the eggs of *Plusiotis gloriosa* and to work out its life history back at his home in Santa Barbara in 1958. He resided in this coastal city until he passed away on July 30, 1975, three months after the death of Mrs. Smyth. There were no children surviving them.

Even after seventy years of collecting insects around the world, Dr. Smyth, when picnicing with his wife, would be sure to have a vial of formaldehyde along in order to perhaps add a few more specimens to his collection of over 100,000 insects. Many of his specimens were donated to the University of Kansas, Los Angeles County Museum of Natural History, and National Museum of Natural History. He also donated many unmounted specimens to my own personal collection, along with his correspondence, papers, books and journals. I am currently undertaking the task of fulfilling his wish to have his insects cared for and mounted. As a scientist, Dr. Eugene Graywood Smyth left behind much completed work and much yet to be completed. His special love was tiger beetles (Cicindelidae), of which he was able to on-sight identify over a hundred species. Surely a man who loved Entomology as much as he, must, even now, have with him a vial of formaldehyde.

Partial List of Publications by E.G. Smyth

- 1905. *Notes on Collecting Cicindelidae*, Trans. Kansas Acad. Sci., 19:425-432.
- 1907. *Notes on Collecting Cicindelidae II*, Trans. Kansas Acad. Sci., 21(1):180-188.
- 1911. *Report on the Fig Moth in Smyrna*, U.S.D.A. Bureau Entomol. Bull. 104, pp. 41-65.
- 1914. *Report of the So. Coast Lab.*, Board of Comm. of Agri. of Puerto Rico, Third Report, pp. 40-52.
- 1915. *Report of the So. Coast Lab.*, Board of Comm. of Agri. of Puerto Rico, Fourth Report, pp. 45-50.
- 1917. *Report of the Entom. Dept.*, Annual Report of the Insular Exper. Stn. of Puerto Rico, Dept. of Agri. and Labor of Puerto Rico, pp. 99-106.

1919. *A Resume of Plant Quarantine Work in Puerto Rico from July 1910 to July 1919*, Dept. of Agri. of Puerto Rico, Plant inspection and Quarantine Report, Bull. 32, pp. 5-56.
1919. *Report of the Division of Entomology*, Annual Report of the Insular Experiment Station of the Dept. of Agri. and Labor of Puerto Rico, pp. 27-31 and pp. 109-129.
1919. *Dominio de la Plaga de la Mosca Cornupeta del Ganado en Puerto Rico*, Revista de Agri. de Puerto Rico, Dept. of Agri. and Labor, 3(6):17-28.
1920. *Annual Report of the Division of Entomology*, Annual Report of the Insular Experiment Station of the Dept. of Agri. and Labor of Puerto Rico, pp. 83-89.
1920. *Cotton Insects in Puerto Rico*. Entomol. News, 31:121-125.
1920. *White Grubs Injuring Sugar Cane in Puerto Rico*, Journal of the Dept. of Agri. of Puerto Rico, 4:No. 11 Rhinoceros Beetles, pp. 1-31.
1921. *La Mosca del Canado (The Horn Fly)*, Circular 39, Dept. of Agri. in Rio Piedras, Puerto Rico, pp. 1-17.
1933. *Techniques in the Mass Production of Trichogramma*, Journal of Economic Entomology, 25(8).
1933. *On the Nicolay & Weiss 'Synopsis of the Cicindelidae'*; Entomol. News, 44(8):197-204.
1934. *The Gregarious Habit of Beetles*, J. Kansas Entom. Soc., 7(334):102-119.
1935. *An analysis of the Cicindela Purpurea Group (Coleo: Cicindel)*, Entomol. News, Vol. XVI, #35, pp. 14-19 and pp. 44-49.
- 1940 *Trichogramma Proves Itself in Sugarcane Borer Control*, Proc. Inter. Soc. Sugar Cane Tech., Baton Rouge, La., pp. 367-377.
1960. *A New Tephritid Fly Injurious to Tomatoes in Peru*, The Bulletin, Dept. of Agri. for the State of Calif., 49(1):16-22.
1960. *Life History of the Silver-Striped Scarabaeid, Plusiotis Gloriosa Le Conte*, Bull. So. Calif. Acad. Sci., 59(2):89-94.